Stuffed, Not Ready-to-Eat Poultry Products

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Illnesses from Stuffed Chicken:
Foodborne Illness Outbreaks: FY 2010 – Present

• FY 2010 – FY 2019:
  • FSIS investigated 51 outbreaks associated with not ready-to-eat (NRTE) poultry
    • 8/51 have been associated with NRTE stuffed poultry products
      • Frozen, raw, stuffed chicken products, which are often breaded and par-fried
      • Products are NRTE, but appear RTE to consumers
      • Labeled raw and include cooking instructions

• June 2021 – Present:
  • Open multistate Salmonella Enteritidis illness outbreak
    • 28 cases from 8 states
    • 62% report eating stuffed chicken
  • Recall of 59,251 pounds; August 9, 2021
Current Poultry Policy:
Labeling

• Manufacturers have taken steps to improve their labeling to ensure that the consumer is aware that the product is raw.

• Industry has taken steps to validate the cooking instructions.

• Industry has further specified that these products should not be microwaved.

2016 NCC Petition

In May 2016, the National Chicken Council petitioned FSIS

• To establish labeling requirements for NRTE stuffed chicken products that may appear RTE; and

• Issue a guidance document for developing and communicating validated cooking instructions.
Consumer Research:
FSIS Consumer Research Findings: Meal Preparation Experiment on Raw Stuffed Chicken Breasts

- Consumers often do not pay attention to the safe handling instructions
  - They are more likely to look at the manufacturer’s cooking instructions

- Nearly 50% of the consumers in the study said they do not typically use a thermometer

- About 70% of participants did not have experience preparing stuffed chicken products from frozen

- About 83% of participants expressed confidence in their ability to safely prepare food when cooking at home
FSIS Consumer Research Findings: Meal Preparation Experiment on Raw Stuffed Chicken Breasts

• Nearly all (99%) of participants reported reading the instructions on the package

• 84% believed the product was raw or partially cooked

• 88% of the treatment group used the food thermometer

• Handwashing recommendations were not followed:
  • Only 5% of participants followed all the steps of correct handwashing
  • During meal preparation, handwashing was only attempted 5% of the time, and there were no successful handwashing attempts.
Questions for NACMPI:
1. Given FSIS’ consumer research findings and an open multistate *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness outbreak, should FSIS re-verify that companies continue to voluntarily label these products as raw in several places on the label and include validated cooking instructions?
NACMPI Committee Question 2, a – c

2. What, if any, actions can FSIS take to prevent and reduce illnesses associated with the handling or consumption of these NRTE products? For example, should FSIS:

a. Conduct exploratory sampling for pathogens and/or indicator organisms in these and other similar raw, stuffed or non-stuffed partially processed products?

b. Require establishments to apply a lethality treatment to ensure that all products are RTE?

c. Sample these products for *Salmonella* because consumers customarily undercook them?
2. What, if any, actions can FSIS take to prevent and reduce illnesses associated with the handling or consumption of these NRTE products? For example, should FSIS:

d. Require establishments that produce these products to reassess their HACCP plans, in light of outbreak data?

e. Conduct targeted consumer outreach? If so, please provide some ideas on the best approaches.